

Preliminary Ten-Week Brood Survey Results, 2005

The warm and dry conditions for most of the summer in Wisconsin have been a welcome change for the game birds of Wisconsin's woodlands and grasslands. The previous two years were cooler and somewhat wetter than the summer of 2005. Excellent incubation and brood rearing conditions existed for most of the state during the majority of the brood rearing period, mid June through August, for turkey, pheasant, ruffed grouse, and gray partridge according to preliminary reports from DNR field personnel.

DNR field personnel were asked to report the number and size of game bird broods observed from 12 June through 20 August during their normal working hours. At the end of the survey period, brood reports were then summarized and compiled by the wildlife surveys program.

Turkeys showed a 55% increase in the number of broods seen per observer and a 19% increase in the size of the broods seen. In 2004, DNR field personnel averaged 2.0 turkey broods seen during the survey period. In 2005, field personnel averaged 3.1 turkey broods seen. The average size of a brood seen in 2004 was 4.3 young per brood, while in 2005 the average brood size was 5.1 young per brood. Turkeys have been expanding their range in Wisconsin ever since their reintroduction and subsequent restocking in all suitable habitats in the state, and continue to increase in number and inhabit new parts of the state.

Pheasants too showed increases in the number of broods seen from 2004 levels. The number of broods seen per observer was up 11% while the average size of the brood was essentially unchanged at -2%. A Rural Mailing Carrier survey and the Spring Breeding Pheasant survey showed a slight increase in the number of breeding pheasants in the spring of 2005. With a good brood year, pheasants should be entering the fall hunting season in good numbers.

Ruffed grouse did not fair as well with the number of broods per observer dropping 28% from 2004 levels. This was some what expected, as the number of breeding males counted on the statewide spring drumming survey was down 10% from the previous year. The one bright spot for ruffed grouse was that of the broods seen, the size of the broods was larger than in 2004, with the average brood being 4.7 young in 2005 compared to 4.2 in 2004. Hopefully, ruffed grouse are beginning their population climb out of their cyclic low.

Gray Partridge showed an increase in the number of broods observed in 2005, but are still well below the historic highs of this spirited little game bird that occurred during the 1960's and 1970's. Brood sizes were down slightly from the previous year.

2004-05 Ten-Week Brood Survey, broods seen per observer and average brood size.

	2004 Broods / Observer	2004 Average Brood Size	2005 Broods / Observer	2005 Average Brood Size
Turkey	2.0	4.3	3.1	5.1
Pheasant	0.44	5.0	0.49	4.9
Ruffed Grouse	0.58	4.2	0.42	4.7
Gray Partridge	0.003	6.0	0.04	4.0

